

INTERVIEW WITH MARVIN
KIRBY ON 1 - 24 - 71 AND
INTERVIEW WITH ERNEST
E. WEBB 2 - 12 - 72: VIRGINIANA
ROOM TAPE NO. 36,
MCLEAN AREA

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REFERENCE

VIRGINIANA ROOM TAPE #36
MCLEAN AREA

Side 1: Interview with Marvin Kirby on 1/24/71

Side 2: Interview with Ernest E. Webb 2/12/72
by Dana Gumb

INDEX
INTERVIEW WITH MARVIN KIRBY ON 24 JANUARY 1971
VIRGINIANA ROOM TAPE #36

Aqueduct Bridge.....	4
Ball Family.....	5-6
Chain Bridge.....	5
Corner, Charlotte.....	7
Country stores, 1900, merchandise.....	2
Elmwood Farm	6
Franklin Sherman School.....	7
Georgetown Pike, description.....	1
Great Falls excursion trips.....	3-4
Hall's Store.....	1
Hummer's Store.....	1-2
Langley, mail service.....	1
school.....	2
Laughlin Real Estate Office (1971).....	3, 6
Lewinsville, school.....	2
stores (Mankin and Besley).....	2
McLean, 1900, description.....	1-2, 6
railroad.....	3
1918 reunion of Franklin Sherman graduating class.....	7
Schools in McLean area.....	2
Tenleytown, post office.....	1
Uncle Henry ^E , Lanley mailman.....	1
Washington and Old Dominion Railroad.....	3-5
Wing, Lucy Madeira.....	5

VIRGINIANA ROOM TAPE #36

INTERVIEW WITH MARVIN KIRBY

INT: January 24, 1971, speaking with Mr. Kirby on _____ Drive in McLean, Virginia. Mr. Kirby, let's begin by having you describe what your first memories of this area were as a boy at the turn of the century.

KIRBY: Well, of course I didn't live in McLean. McLean was nonexistent at that time. I lived in Langley which is approximately two miles east of McLean, on a farm and we lived on I guess it was known as Georgetown Pike across from what is now the CIA entrance on Dolley Madison. It was a rough old stone road with dirt sideroads to it. One thing that I do remember is that we got our mail through Washington, D.C. Now how anybody ever figured that out I'll never know, but it came to a station known as Tenleytown, and an old colored man who was known respectfully as Uncle Henry used to bring the mail from Tenleytown by horse and some kind of a vehicle. I don't know that it was a wagon, it wasn't a buggy, but he brought it to Mr. Hummer's store in Langley, and on his way back to Tenleytown he would leave the mail in homemade mailboxes along the road. I recall Uncle Henry could neither read nor write, but Mr. Hummer at the store would make signs that he would use, and he got the mail in the right boxes.

INT: How much of a town was Langley? Were there just several houses?

KIRBY: Langley had several houses, and in my very earliest recollection there were two stores, a store owned by Mr. Hall and one owned by Mr. Hummer who had the Post Office. There was also on the forks of the road at Langley and the road that went on through what is now

KIRBY - 2

KIRBY: McLean, there was a town hall that sat in the triangle there. It was later moved and converted into a dwelling.

INT: Do you recall a school there in Langley?

KIRBY: Yes, Langley had a school which I attended, and don't ask me when I started there. I don't remember that. They had a little one-room school that to the best of my recollection I must have started there about 1910 or so. There were seven grades in the one school building, just the one room and a stove in the center of it.

INT: Just like I see in all the textbooks about the one-room country schools.

INT 2: What about Lewinsville on the other side of the town? What do you recall about that?

KIRBY: Lewinsville had a school also. I don't know that I was ever in the school, but I assume it was much like the Langley school because it was a thing of the period. And as I recall there were two stores in Lewinsville, the Mankin Store, and I don't know anything about it except that I remember knowing it was there, where Wood has his antique refinishing business now and the Besley Store that was nearer to McLean on Chain Bridge Road and that was in the vicinity of Evans Farm Inn.

INT: What do you recall about what was sold in these country stores? Do you recall over at Langley possibly what some of the merchandise they sold was?

KIRBY: Well, whatever canned goods that they may have had at that time, and bacon was one of the things and tobacco and candy I know, and cider was another item. I think all of the merchandise that Mr. Hummer got came from Dyer's, which was a wholesale house in

KIRBY - 3

KIRBY: Georgetown. He also had some sort of a deal with an oil company whereby people bought kerosene through him, but it was delivered to the various farms along the road.

INT: When was McLean first established that you remember? When was it first set up?

KIRBY: That I don't know, but I can remember as a child coming to McLean to get the streetcar to go to Washington or go to Great Falls.

INT: Oh, so the railroad was already through at this time?

KIRBY: Well, you'll have to go back and look at this history we have, but somewhere in the period, say from 1908 to 1910.

INT: So was there a place called McLean?

KIRBY: That was established, and McLean was one of the stations on the Washington and Old Dominion Railroad.

INT: Do you remember the station there in McLean? Where exactly was it?

KIRBY: I think that it was right there almost at the steps of Mrs. Laughlin's real estate office. The blue house.

INT: They keep painting it. It's white one year and blue the next. What was the station made up of? Was it just a platform or was there a building attached to it?

KIRBY: It was sort of a little shed-like building, but I think it had bow seats in it.

INT: Do you recall what the streetcars looked like? How long? Just a couple of cars?

KIRBY: It was just one single car, and it was a right long thing, but I don't remember how long it was, maybe thirty feet, maybe more than that.

INT: Did you ever make the trip out to Great Falls?

KIRBY - 4

KIRBY: Oh, that was the excursion. Yeah, I made a trip to Great Falls several times to go to the various picnics and that sort of thing.

INT: I think I told you when my grandfather got a lot of tour guides of Washington in the 'twenties and 'thirties, and that was always one of the big ads, this special trip: "Don't Miss the Trip to Great Falls'."

KIRBY: That was from Rosslyn or from Georgetown. Remember that the street-car used to go to Rosslyn and then go across the old Aqueduct Bridge into 36th and M Streets.

INT: Is that the foundation that's sitting there at Potomac, the Aqueduct Bridge.

KIRBY: Yes, and then you could save a nickel if I remember correctly by walking and not getting on this train in Georgetown. Then later that was changed when the Francis Scott Key Bridge came. Then you walked across the bridge and got the car at Rosslyn. Then you walked across from Georgetown to get the car to Great Falls.

INT: You know, I was just going out Old Dominion the other day, and going over the Difficult Run Bridge, and it just occurred to me, I don't know if you would remember, but is that the same bridge? That was there for the railroad?

KIRBY: Well I guess so, but my wife could tell you more about that than I could, because she used to live right near the bridge. On this side. I think it must be the same foundation for the bridge, or the same trestle I think is the word they use.

INT: How was it transferred to the Highway Department and when? Do you know?

KIRBY: I don't remember when, but sometime in the early or mid-thirties

KIRBY - 5

KIRBY: the railroad ceased, and, I think I'm correct about this, Mrs. Wing up at the Madeira School bought the defunct railway right of way and turned it over to the state.

INT: Turned it right over to the state?

KIRBY: Well, I don't know "immediately", but somehow she negotiated this, and it became then later Old Dominion Drive.

INT: It's really quite a well laid-out road. The banks of it are like a railroad.

KIRBY: It was all done to conform with the _____ (unclear)

INT: What do you recall about Chain Bridge and how that has evolved up to its present height over the river?

KIRBY: Well, I think we saw in some of the books we looked over some of the pictures there. I remember not the old Chain Bridge, but the one that's
(?) without steel girders before the present bridge.

INT: Do you recall the flood, I think it was in the thirties?

KIRBY: Yes, I've seen water several times splashing on the bridge.

INT: I can't imagine that.

KIRBY: Well, of course, the present bridge is higher than what the old bridge was.

INT: And about the ice?

KIRBY: Oh, there were blockages and blockages of ice and of the debris that came down following the spring thaws.

INT: That just must have been something, right up to the bridge like that. What about the Ball family? Do you recall any of the Balls: did you know any of them personally, the family that owned so much property around here?

KIRBY: Well, in this area where we live, in Elmwood Estates, I remember Mr. Selwyn Ball and his wife Martha, and I remember them living here

KIRBY - 6

KIRBY: on what was then a farm. Then on the other side of Old Dominion was another family of Balls, and, of course, let's say there was Mr. Stewart and Miss Sallie in that family. In this development where we are I have since learned that it was known as Elmwood Farm, and I am told this is where the telephone exchange got its name, and, of course, where we got Elmwood Estates for our development.

INT: Right, and was it one of the Balls that built that big white house up there?

KIRBY: That is something I can't tell you, but I just assume so, because from a friend who is now deceased, she told me that this was Virginus (?) Ball property. I don't know who the older Balls were other than Mr. Stewart and Miss Sallie, who had the property across Old Dominion that was Killarney (?).

INT: Well, what do you recall about the central area of McLean, right around the old station. My parents just the other day were trying to recall 1955, what it looked like before the Super Giant and all these other developments. What do you recall about some of the early stores that were in that central area?

KIRBY: Well, right in the triangle of what is now Elm Street and Old Dominion, the Storm Store, which was a general store and Post Office for McLean where Texaco is now, well relatively where it is. Then where the Arfax Electronics, Radio, whatever it is, there used to be a house there before the electronics place came that was a Safeway. Before that I remember this two story frame house being there and people by the name of Fagin (?) living in it and going walking from the farm up there on Sunday morning to buy a Sunday paper. Other than that I don't remember too much about the early part of McLean except that the Laughlin office was a private dwelling, and it's been there for some time.

KIRBY - 7

INT: What about Franklin Sherman School? What do you recall about that as a student there and later on?

KIRBY: Well, I think I went there in 1916 from the old Langley School. It was a two-story brick building with six or eight classrooms and an auditorium. The auditorium was on the second floor. I think there were just two classrooms on the second floor. Just one room was used for the two years of highschool that they had, and all the high-school students fit into one room.

INT: Now then we have two-thousand or two-thousand, one hundred.

KIRBY: I was in the graduating class, a two year class, of 1918. There were eleven of us in the graduating class.

INT: What kind of things did you study at the highschool?

KIRBY: Basically history, Latin and maths.

INT: Latin?

KIRBY: Oh, yes, Latin and algebra, of course that comes under maths.

INT: Do you remember Mrs. Corner?

KIRBY: Oh, yes. Mrs. Corner I guess was the first principal at Franklin Sherman, and she started there as Charlotte Kirtin (Curtain?). She didn't become Mrs. Corner until the year that we graduated.

INT: She had a big interview that was done with her. She was involved with this and the first McLean Citizens Association and just all sorts of things as the first principal at Franklin Sherman.

KIRBY: In sixty, I guess there were seven of the graduating class of 1918 that got together for a dinner meeting at Evans Farm, and some of us had our husbands or wives with us, and Mrs. Corner was the honor guest.

END OF TAPE

VIRGINIANA ROOM TAPE #36
INTERVIEW WITH ERNEST E. WEBB IN 1972
BY DANA GUMB

GUMB: Balls Hill Road near...what was the address?

WEBB: 1325.

GUMB: 1325 Balls Hill Road on February 12th with Mr. and Mrs. Ernest Webb.

WEBB: Ernest E. Webb.

GUMB: We'd like to start off, Mr. Webb, by asking you about your parents and where they were born.

WEBB: _____ (unclear) Lynchburg, Virginia. (Loud hum in transmission and Mike not turned toward him makes most of Mr. Webb's remarks here inaudible.) My father _____ Loudon County.

GUMB: And how long have you lived in this area?

WEBB: I've lived here all my life.

GUMB: I understand you were born right here in this house.

Mrs. W: No, no, no. It was an old one. This house was built thirty-five years ago. This is a part of Ball's, Elmwood Estates. When the road went through this piece was Ball's. The road cut it off from _____ (unclear) This was Ball property.

GUMB: There was something I wanted to ask you about Balls Hill Road over here. Did Balls Hill Road originally cut along the cedars there?

MRS. W.: _____ (unclear) That's where it got the name of Balls Hill Road. There used to be a hill down there on the pike. This was a short way to get to the Georgetown Turnpike and to the mill _____ (unclear) and that went right into that road, into the Georgetown Pike, Old Georgetown Pike. It got the name, and from that it was called Ball, because it was Ball's Hill. Later on it was given its name, Ball's Hill. It never was Ball's Hill Road. _____ (unclear)

WEBB - 2

GUMB: Do you remember what that ford looked like over on Balls Hill Road?

MR. W: Yes, I picked up bullets off that place, more than I could hold in my hands, put them in my pockets and everyplace else. Right near where that house is....

GUMB: That white house?

MR. W: Yes, that white house there. That used to be a Storm (unclear) and all of them died after that. Boy died and the girl died and finally _____ (unclear) Dr. Trammell. He married her and _____ Elizabeth _____.

GUMB: Talking to Mr. Trammell, I understood that when they built the Beltway, 495, they covered over this ford and all the walls?)....

MRS. W: That's what he was telling you. He took the bullets.

MR. W: Filled my pockets up with them.

GUMB: Well, what was Balls Hill Road like back at the turn of the century? Was it just a dirt road?

MR. W: It was a mud road. I'd take my team and cut pines and pull them through down the hill. So the _____ could walk on them-----.
It was mud from there _____. I've hauled many a load, cut them in there and hauled them down. _____ in Lewinsville.
_____ (unclear)

GUMB: Was Georgetown Pike the same sort of muddy road? Back at the turn of the century?

MR. W.: _____ (unclear) so it got to be a road.

MRS. W: Did anyone tell you that there used to be a toll gate on that road?

GUMB: On Georgetown Pike?

MRS. W: (To Mr. Webb) Is that where the toll gate was?

MR. W: On Georgetown Pike, right in town

GUMB: In Langley?

MR. W: At Langley. Right there at that filling station...the toll gate sat right here. That's called Kirby Road.

MRS. W: Well, wasn't the toll gate up here by the falls? When I came to Langley there was a toll gate.

MR. W: That must be at Great Falls, on that end. But I got on at Langley.

MRS. W: Did you have to pay toll?

MR. W: Paid toll on the bridge for a while. At Tyson's Corner.

MRS. W: But you used to pay toll to cross the bridge? Chain Bridge?

GUMB: How much did you have to pay to get across the bridge?

MR. W: You've got me on that. I don't remember. It wasn't too much. The whole family and everybody'd be in their wagon. But I can't remember what the toll was.

GUMB: And did everybody have wagons?

MR. W: That's what everyone had was wagons.

GUMB: And do you remember the first automobile?

MR. W: _____ (unclear) Most of them were buggies. Most of them had dog carts. Mr. Ball was unusual; he had a dog cart.

GUMB: Up at Elmwood there?

MR. W: Yes, he didn't have a buggy, he had a dog cart _____ to bring the boys back _____.

GUMB: Do you remember Mr. Ball? Do you remember what he was like?

TRANSMISSION CONFUSING AND UNCLEAR

MRS. W: Mrs. McGill remodeled the log house. They lived in it. It's still there. They modernized it. That's where the Balls lived first, and then they built the big white house.

MR. W: _____ (unclear)

WEBB - 4

MR. W:had a brother named Mottrom....

MRS. W: Mottrom Drive, that's where it originated.

GUMB: See, all these names.....

MR. W: The Mott boy and I were about the same age, and me and _____ sat up there every morning and _____. We were five years old. I can remember it as well as I'm looking in your face right now..

_____ He said, "What are you going to do when you're grown?" I said, "I'm going to live right there ^{where I was born} and build myself a house. I'm going to marry and then build a house." I said, "What are you going to do?" He said, "I'm going to go to Montana. I'm going out there and _____ (unclear) Think of all those years, and we didn't do anything that we thought we were going to do when we were five years old.

GUMB: Do you remember what the railroad looked like and what the stations looked like along Old Dominion?

MRS. W: I remember McLean Station. That was here when I came. That was yellow, a horrible yellow. I never will forget it.

MR. W: _____ (unclear)

MRS. W: Enrico's you mean? The cleaners? That's what the stations looked like. They were big.

MR. W: _____ That was just like that and painted green. I super--
vised every _____ ^{from that big red house} from Georgetown all the way to the Falls. But the inspector was from Philadelphia. He didn't get down here in time for the contractor who was from down South. So they had me inspect it and _____ the men what to do until he'd get there. He never got there before ten or eleven o'clock and _____ (unclear)

Mrs. W: What did Balls Hill Station look like? I never came.

WEBB - 5

MR. W: Balls Hill Station was exactly like that.

MRS. W: All of them were big.

MR. W: Every one of them was the same. _____ Balls Hill Station was _____. ~~THAT WAS THE SAME AS THE OTHERS~~ A lot of people got on that car there.

MRS. W: I got on in McLean.

MR. W: I know that. I'm saying that's why the stations had to be so big.

GUMB: How big were the cars and how many cars were there.

MRS. W: Just one. They were closed, because I remember the cars.

MR. W: She remembers the cars, but when it first started it was different from later on.

MRS. W: What time did the first car get in?

MR. W: The first car came up from _____ and arrived about ten o'clock in the morning. And everybody that went down there didn't want to ride the first car _____ and load the first car _____ so I got word to load the first car. When the car came I had to get teams down there _____

GUMB: And you say that you supervised the construction.

MR. W: _____ (unclear) had eight men to a _____ that turned the concrete. They had no machines. _____ and this time of year you couldn't mix that cement until the degrees got to be forty.....

END OF TAPE